

Amendments to the Claims

1. (previously presented) Connecting means made in such a way that one said connecting means can be connected with the other connecting means in a positive fit in two directions that are perpendicular relative to each other, and wherein said one and other connecting means have the same geometry.

2. (cancelled)

3. (previously presented) Connecting means according to claim 1, that are made so that they can be connected by lowering the one connecting means relative to the other connecting means and then pushing the connecting means towards each other in a direction perpendicular relative to the lowering motion.

4. (previously presented) Connecting means according to claim 1, wherein two connecting means are first coupled with each other and are then interlocked by inserting a separate locking means, wherein the separate locking means preferably is a securing pin having in particular a cross-section that is substantially rectangular.

5. (previously presented) Connecting means according to claim 1, comprising step-shaped or stair-shaped locking means.

6. (previously presented) Connecting means according to claim 1, comprising a separate locking means which can be pushed into a channel formed by the connecting means, wherein at least one external dimension of the connecting means is greater than the corresponding internal dimension of the channel, so that the separate locking means can be held in the channel by press fit and the separate locking means and/or the (plural) locking means consist of a compressible material such as plastics.

7. (previously presented) Panels with connecting means provided laterally according to claim 1, which are formed in particular as laminate flooring panels comprising a base board and a decorative layer.

8. (currently amended) Panels of rectangular shape with having lateral connecting [means] elements provided laterally along lateral edges of the panels, which ~~panels are formed in particular as laminate flooring panels comprising a base board and a decorative layer, the lateral connecting elements are configured to means being made in such a way that they can be connected with each other in~~ with a positive fit in two directions that are perpendicular relative to each other, ~~comprising further and longitudinal connecting elements provided along longitudinal edges of the panels, which longitudinal connecting elements are configured to be means that are connected with each other by a turning motion, and which are preferably provided on long sides of a panel with a rectangular surface.~~

9. (new) Panels according to claim 8, wherein the lateral connecting elements have the same geometry.

10. (new) Panels according to claim 8, wherein the lateral connecting elements are configured so that they can be connected by lowering the one connecting element relative to the other connecting element and then pushing the connecting elements towards each other in a direction perpendicular relative to the lowering motion.

11. (new) Panels according to claim 8, including a locking device insertable into a space between the lateral connecting elements when coupled together to lock the lateral connecting elements against separation.

12. (new) Panels according to claim 11, wherein the locking device has a substantially rectangular cross-section.

13. (new) Panels according to claim 8, wherein the lateral connecting elements are step-shaped.

14. (new) Panels according to claim 8, including a separate locking device that can be pushed into a channel formed by the lateral connecting elements when coupled together, wherein at least one external dimension of the lateral connecting elements is greater than the corresponding internal dimension of the channel, so that the separate locking device can be held in the channel by press fit and the separate locking device and/or the lateral locking elements is/are made of a compressible material.

15. (new) Panels according to claim 8, wherein panels are formed as laminate flooring panels including a base board and a decorative layer.